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SIPDIS

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TAGS: PREL PGOV MD RS

SUBJECT: RUSSIA OPEN TO ANY TRANSNISTRIA SOLUTION BOTH SIDES CAN AGREE ON

Classified By: PolCouns Alice G. Wells for reasons 1.4(b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Summary: Russian Special Negotiator for the Transnistria conflict Valeriy Nesterushkin said Moscow was both open to the format of renewed conflict resolution negotiations, as well as the outcome, as long as both sides could be brought to agree on the outcome. He mentioned that the timing of Medvedev's August outreach to Moldovan President Voronin and to Transnistrian "President" Smirnov was a follow-on to the April meetings of the conflict parties, and not linked to the Georgia conflict. Nesterushkin insisted the 2003 Kozak plan was a better basis for negotiations since it was the sole document agreed to by both sides. Commentators agree that Russia is looking for a diplomatic breakthrough in Moldova to leaven its military engagement in Georgia. End Summary.

¶2. (C) Russian Special Negotiator for the Transnistria conflict Valeriy Nesterushkin provided us September 4 with few details of the August 25 Medvedev-Voronin and September 3 Medvedev-Smirnov meetings. He insisted that Medvedev had not discussed any specific mechanism how to resolve the Transnistria conflict, although the Kremlin website emphasized a trilateral Moldova-Transnistria-Russia framework. The key outcome of the meetings was both conflict parties' willingness to reengage in negotiations toward a solution of the conflict. The actual negotiating format, whether it be 5 2 talks, 3 2 talks, expert or high-level talks, would be decided later, including at the 3 2 talks on Monday in Vienna.

¶3. (C) Nesterushkin rejected the notion that the timing of Medvedev's outreach to the Transnistria conflict parties had anything to do with an attempt by the GOR to portray itself as capable of peacefully resolving conflicts, in the wake of its Georgian military escapade. Nesterushkin described the meetings as a logical follow-on to Russia's earlier engagement with the parties that led to the April 10 meeting between Voronin and Smirnov in Bender. He allowed that the conflict was receiving more attention in the wake of the Georgian conflict, and that the "breakdown" of the South Ossetian mechanism had put resolution efforts into sharper relief.

¶4. (C) Nesterushkin said the GOR was open to any solution that both parties could agree on. A solution that preserved the territorial integrity of Moldova was possible. However, he advocated heavily for the Transnistrian side, highlighting its quasi-statehood and need to be able to veto any decisions in Chisinau that primarily affected Transnistrian issues. In this context, he explained the reemergence of references to the 2003 Kozak plan as a possible springboard for the renewed talks. Not only was this the last document both sides had agreed to, but it contained the veto power Tiraspol demanded. Nesterushkin rejected Moldova's 2005 law regarding Transnistria's future status, noting it was adopted unilaterally, and only referred to "population centers on the left bank of the Dniestr," not to Transnistria as a whole,

thus allowing lawmakers in Chisinau to break up Transnistria by targeting different laws toward different Transnistrian cities.

¶5. (C) Comment: While coy on exact details of Medvedev's earlier meetings, Nesterushkin was unambiguous about the GOR's interest in resolving the Transnistria conflict. Nesterushkin's protestations aside, Russian commentators agree that Moscow is looking for a diplomatic breakthrough that will offset its military paradigm in Georgia.

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